

**Town of Chester  
Selectboard’s Meeting  
Thursday, April 18, 2024  
Municipal Complex  
Approved Minutes**

**I. Preliminaries**

Call the Meeting to Order  
Roll Call  
Pledge of Allegiance  
Chairman’s Additions or Deletions  
Public Comment (10 minutes)  
Temporary Intersection Safety Improvement  
Public Hearing: Budget & Warrant  
Public Hearing: SB2  
Recommendations and Organization of Warrant  
Chairman’s Announcements  
Potential Non-Public Sessions  
Adjournment

*1.1 Call to Order*

Vice Chairman Couture called the meeting of the Chester Selectboard to order at 6:00pm.

*1.2 Roll Call*

Selectboard Present:

Steve Couture  
Dana Theokas  
Dick Trask

Selectboard Absent:

Chuck Myette  
Stephen Landau

Town Administrator Debra Doda

Members of the Public Present at various times:

Aaron Berube, Police Chief  
Jack Cannon, Budget Committee  
Justine Celentano, Tax Collector/ Town Clerk  
Kim Chaze  
Phil Gladu, Fire Chief / EMD  
Jocelyn Grady  
Kathy Guilmette, Budget Committee  
Andrew Hadik, Town Planner  
Chris Hadik  
William “Bill” Lambert, NH DOT

Rhonda Lamphere, Treasurer  
David LaVita  
Charlotte Lister, Budget Committee  
Ron McKinnon, Budget Committee  
Mike Oleson  
Corinna Reishus, Recreation Director  
Lynn Rockwell  
David Scott  
Saul Shriber  
Beth Swanson, Budget Committee  
Rob Varsalone, Budget Committee

and other persons unknown to the Recording Secretary.

### *1.3 Pledge of Allegiance*

Vice Chairman Couture led the attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance.

### *1.4 Chairman’s Additions or Deletions*

Vice Chairman Couture added two veteran’s credits to the consent agenda and StreetScans with Mr. Hadik during 2.1.

### *1.5 Public Comment*

Vice Chairman Couture mentioned a statement for the public hearing has been submitted to the board to be entered into public record. Attached at the end of the minutes.

Ms. Rockwell is opposed to adopting SB2. The opportunity to meet and have discussion at Town meeting is essential in a small town.

As no other Members of the Public wished to be heard, Public Comment was closed at 6:05pm.

## **II. Appointments**

### *2.1 Temporary Intersection Safety Improvement*

Town Planner Hadik introduced Mr. Lambert, NH DOT Safety Administrator. Mr. Lambert has interim safety recommendation from now until 2026 for the intersection of 102/121. Mr. Lambert mentioned the intersection has been on the DOTs radar for a while and a road safety audit was done in 2012. There were improvements made after that audit; however, there continues to be around 15 accidents per year. The intersection is a candidate for an all-way stop. All way stops have been found to be successful in rural areas but there are pros and cons.

Selectwoman Theokas inquired if the public supports this, will the other project still move forward. The intersection project for either a roundabout or turn lanes is slated for July 2026-2027 currently and this would just be a temporary fix. Selectman Trask asked what the timeframe for installation would be if approved. Mr. Lambert believes it could be installed in a few months. Vice Chairman Couture asked if the school opening and closing was considered as part of the analysis.

Vice Chairman Couture asked when a decision for the temporary fix at the intersection is needed. Mr. Lambert said not to wait until the final project has started in three years.

Mr. Schriber, Jennifer Drive, asked if a regular light would solve the issue. Mr. Lambert believes the project might be moving in that direction. Mr. Schriber is concerned with parking and loss of land for the other options. Mr. Scott, Derry Road, works in the bridge design department for the DOT and he believes the town should give it a shot if Mr. Lambert is recommending it.

Ms. Swanson, Chester Street, asked how all-way stop would affect traffic. Mr. Lambert stated It would be similar on Chester Street as it is now since they have to stop but a more in-depth traffic study would be needed.

Selectwoman Theokas is concerned it will divert traffic to Webster Lane, which is not in great condition. Mr. McKinnon, Hanson Road, asked if a line could be put down on the road and the light only turns green when someone is actually there. Mr. Lambert stated that is for the final project, however when the State does signals, they always put detection on signals.

Chief Gladu asked if stopped traffic will make it difficult to get in and out of the Chester General Store. Corey Spetelunas, NH DOT, feels when people are sitting in traffic, they will usually let people in. Ms. Grady, Golden Eye Circle, suggested a “Do Not Block Driveway” sign be installed.

Vice Chairman Couture would like more analysis on the project before making a decision.

Town Planner Hadik gave a brief synopsis of what StreetScan is and how it is used. He mentioned it is already built into the budget. SOR Piper stated this is a service the Town has been using and it provides valuable information on the roads.

***Selectwoman Theokas motioned to approve the StreetScan contract. Vice Chairman Couture seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette –absent, Trask– aye, Theokas –aye, Couture –aye, Landau – absent. With three in favor, the motion passed with Myette and Landau absent.***

***Selectwoman Theokas motioned to allow Vice Chairman Couture to sign the StreetScan contract. Selectman Trask seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette –absent, Trask– aye, Theokas –aye, Couture –aye, Landau – absent. With three in favor, the motion passed with Myette and Landau absent.***

## *2.2 Public Hearing: Budget & Warrant Public Hearing*

***Selectman Trask motioned to open the Budget and Warrant Public Hearing. Mr. Cannon seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Dobbins – absent, Guilmette –aye, Trask– aye, Cannon –aye, Lister –aye, McKinnon – aye, Swanson – aye, and Varsalone – aye. With seven in favor, the motion passed with Dobbins absent.***

Ms. Guilmette stated the Budget Committee has been working with the Selectboard on the budget. The Budget Committee’s responsibility is to watch the bottom line. The Selectboard and Budget Committee are not in alignment with the 24-25 budget. Ms. Guilmette mentioned the Budget Committee would only be voting on warrants that have a tax impact.

Ms. Guilmette read Article #9 – Repurposing of Mosquito Abatement ETF.

151  
152 *“Shall the Town rename and repurpose the Mosquito Abatement Expendable Trust Fund, established in*  
153 *2007, to the Pest Control Expendable Trust Fund under the provisions of NH RSA 35:16, in order to fund*  
154 *the control of all undesirable pests, such as but not limited to mosquitos, ticks, rodents, etc. Should this*  
155 *article pass, line 01-4194-1-4390.15 in the Operating Budget will be reduced to \$1. 2/3 majority vote*  
156 *required.”*

157  
158 There were no comments or questions on Article #9.

159  
160 Ms. Guilmette read Article #10 – Legal Costs ETF.

161  
162 *“Shall the Town repurpose the Legal Costs Expendable Trust Fund in order to add the Selectboard as*  
163 *agents to expend and to remove the upper limit of thirty thousand dollars (\$30,000). Before any*  
164 *expenditures are made, a public hearing will be held with notice provided as per NH RSA 91-A:2. Should*  
165 *this Article pass, line 01-4153-1-4320.01 in the Operating Budget will be reduced by ten thousand*  
166 *dollars (\$10,000). 2/3 majority vote required.”*

167  
168 Ms. Lamphere, Fremont Road, asked for the purpose of this article. Vice Chairman Couture stated this  
169 was set up when the town contracted with Derry prosecution, and it was unknown if there would be  
170 additional costs. Selectman Trask mentioned the Board is asking for the cap to be removed and the  
171 Selectboard made agents to expend. This is not asking for additional funding for the account.

172  
173 Ms. Guilmette read Article #11 – Repurposing of 300th Anniversary Celebration CRF.

174  
175 *“Shall the Town rename and repurpose the 300th Anniversary Celebration Capital Reserve Fund,*  
176 *established in 2013, to the Celebrations Capital Reserve Fund under the provisions of NH RSA 35:16, in*  
177 *order to continue accruing funds for future significant anniversaries and other celebrations. 2/3*  
178 *majority vote required.”*

179  
180 There were no comments or questions on Article #11.

181  
182 Ms. Guilmette read Article #12 – Repurposing of Commemorative Monument CRF.

183  
184 *“Shall the Town repurpose the Commemorative Monument Capital Reserve Fund under the provisions*  
185 *of NH RSA 35:16 in order to not only fund the creation of new commemorative monuments but also to*  
186 *fund the repair of existing monuments with all associated costs. 2/3 majority vote required.”*

187  
188 Mr. Cannon asked what monuments need repair in Town. Selectwoman Theokas mentioned the civil  
189 war monument needs repairs from an incident with a toilet bowl.

190  
191 Ms. Guilmette did not read Article #13 - Petition – SB2.

192  
193 Ms. Guilmette read Article #14 – Municipal CIP CRF Funding.

194  
195 *“Special Warrant Article. Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of seven hundred thousand*  
196 *dollars (\$700,000) to be added to the capital reserve fund known as the Town’s Municipal Capital*  
197 *Improvement Plan Capital Reserve Fund established at the 2013 Town Meeting.”*

Mr. Chaze asked how a resident understands the document that is being read this evening. Ms. Guilmette pointed out this article is for the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). There is an article to fund the CIP and an article to release the funding for projects.

Mr. Hadik, Chester Street, asked why the funding of the CIP is \$100K more than in the article last year. Selectwoman Theokas stated the goal of the CIP is not to borrow. Mr. Hadik asked if the Board is looking ahead at projects to explain the increase in funding.

Ms. Guilmette read Article #15 – Municipal CIP CRF Spending.

*“Special Warrant Article. Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of five hundred forty-nine thousand four hundred dollars (\$549,400) for the following projects:*

GGB	Municipal Complex Reroofing	\$176,330
GGB	IT Hardware & Software Upgrades	\$5,000
GGB	Repair Post Office Support Piers (new)	\$10,000
TC/TX	Two (2) New Ballot Counting Machines	\$15,000
Library	Repair Water Damage	\$31,500
Police	Cruiser with Outfitting	\$70,270
Fire	Personal Protective Equipment	\$20,300
Highway	Annual Surveying & Engineering Services	\$10,000
Highway	Excavator	\$211,000

*and withdraw five hundred nineteen thousand four hundred dollars (\$519,400) from the Municipal Capital Improvement Plan Capital Reserve Fund, established in 2013, and thirty thousand dollars (\$30,000) from the Police Special Detail Special Revenue Fund, established in 2001, as offsetting revenue towards the Cruiser purchase only. Should the Wheeled excavator purchase be approved, line 01-4312-1-4490.11 in the Operating Budget will be reduced by \$25,000.*

*This will be a non-lapsing article per RSA 32:7-a, IV, and will not lapse until the work is complete, or December 31st, 2026, whichever comes first.”*

Mr. Macdonald, Hills Farm Road, asked if a cost analyst has been done and if it is worth it for the town to purchase new cruisers and equipment. Chief Berube explained the goal for cruisers is to keep them until they have between 125,000 to 150,000 miles on them. Which for a cruiser running all the time is actually around 350,000 to 400,000 miles. Once the cars have served their purpose for the Police Department the vehicles are evaluated and either kept for another department in town or traded in. The town does get an extended warranty for up to 125,000 miles on the cruisers. The 2020 cruiser is out of warranty and needed to be repaired recently at a cost of \$4400.00.

Ms. Lamphere mentioned some of the departments have revolving accounts that could be used for some of the purchases. An example is the Police Detail revolving account which could be used to help with the costs associated with the cruiser. Ms. Guilmette pointed out revolving funds are being used for the purchase of the cruiser.

Mr. Nelson, Parker Road, asked why the Town is asking for funding to purchase two ballot machines when there are articles to discontinue the use of ballot machines. Selectman Trask pointed out the counting of ballots were petitioned and not placed on the ballot by the Selectboard.

Mr. Oleson, Chester Street, feels the wheeled excavator is not the right piece of equipment for the town and he will not support it. A loader backhoe would be more useful for the town and can be used year-round and an excavator can be rented when needed.

Mr. Cannon asked for the price of a loader backhoe. Mr. Oleson stated it will be about \$160K to \$165K.

Selectman Trask asked what piece of equipment is most efficient for ditch work. It is an excavator but ditch work only happens for a few weeks. Mr. McKinnon asked how many days or weeks the department needs the equipment. Mr. Oleson advised it’s about 25 days a year.

Selectman Trask asked if a rubber track excavator is better. The employees would need a Class A license and a trailer to move it around town. Mr. Cannon mentioned the hired equipment line has \$50K. Would it be in the best interest of the Town not to purchase a wheeled excavator for \$211K when it can be rented for a month at a cost of \$8K.

SOR Piper doesn’t disagree that a rubber track is better. The question is would the Town be willing to pay for the employees to get their Class A license and purchase a trailer. Selectwoman Theokas asked for the price of a trailer. A trailer can be purchased for approximately \$32K.

Mr. Richardson, Town Farm Road, inquired about the scope of work for the municipal complex roof. Selectwoman Theokas advised this amount is for the sloped roofs.

Ms. Guilmette read Article #16 – Operating Budget.

*Special Warrant Article. Shall the Town raise and appropriate the Budget Committee recommended amount of six million seven thousand seven hundred forty-three dollars (\$6,007,743) for the operating budget for the support of Town government for the payment of salaries and for the payment of statutory obligations of the Town. The Selectboard recommends six million one hundred thirty-seven thousand ten dollars (\$6,137,010).*

*This article does not include appropriations voted in other warrant articles.*

	BOS	BC
General Government	\$ 2,826,208	\$ 2,830,661
Public Safety	\$ 1,697,767	\$ 1,666,928
Highways, Streets, Bridges	\$ 918,348	\$ 881,207
Sanitation	\$ 267,073	\$ 257,073
Health & Welfare	\$ 38,062	\$ 37,815
Culture & Recreation	\$ 327,480	\$ 326,149
Conservation & Economic Development	\$ 8,167	\$ 8,139
Debt Service	\$ 2	\$ 2
Total Appropriation	\$ 6,083,107	\$ 6,007,974

Ms. Guilmette inquired how Board was reducing the line. Town Administrator Doda stated the reductions are from legal and maintenance part-time. Selectwoman Theokas mentioned the Board added additional funding to the fire department testing and the full-time budget line.

Ms. Guilmette asked if funding was being applied from the unassigned fund balance as offsetting revenue. Town Administrator Doda agreed with that statement. Mr. McKinnon asked if the Board was using the unassigned fund balance for general operations. Town Administrator Doda mentioned the

request by the Selectboard to use \$80K from the unassigned fund balance as offsetting revenue against the Selectboard’s budget. If the Town voted for the Selectboard’s budget there would need to be an amendment on the floor, as the Warrant Article specifies the Legislative Body is voting for the Budget Committee’s budget. Mr. Cannon inquired if there is a record of this being done. Town Administrator Doda answered no; however, it is legal. Mr. Cannon called it a shell game and he does not approve.

Ms. Guilmette read Article #17 – Town Revaluation CRF Funding.

*“Special Warrant Article. Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000) to be added to the Town Revaluation Capital Reserve Fund established at the 2009 Town Meeting in order to prepare for the next Town revaluation in 2029.”*

There were no comments or questions on Article #17.

Ms. Guilmette read Article #18 – Town Master Plan CRF Funding.

*“Special Warrant Article. Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of seven thousand dollars (\$7,000) to be added to the Town Master Plan Capital Reserve Fund established at the 2019 Town Meeting.”*

Selectwoman Theokas explained the Town Master Plan is led by the Planning Board as well as a subset of the community with different stakeholders to look at the town’s goals for the next five to seven years around zoning and business development. It also looks at the town’s funding objectives for police and fire. Town Planner Hadik mentioned this is a requirement by the state if you want to have a zoning ordinance and impact fees. Southern NH Planning Commission does the work on the plan. It is up to the townspeople to put in input for the plan.

Ms. Guilmette read Article #19 - Winter Road Maintenance ETF.

*Special Warrant Article. Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of one hundred five thousand dollars (\$105,000) to be added to the expendable trust fund known as the Winter Road Maintenance Fund established at the 2006 Town Meeting and increased at the 2017 Town Meeting for the purpose of plowing, salting, sanding, and general winter road maintenance in the Town of Chester. The Winter Road Maintenance Expendable Trust Fund shall not exceed one hundred five thousand dollars (\$105,000).”*

Ms. Lamphere, Fremont Road, asked how much has been overspent in the budget for winter road maintenance items. At the current time it has been overspent by around \$24K. Ms. Lamphere advised this can be amended if it is not completely needed. Mr. Oleson mentioned both the salt and plowing lines in the budget need to be overspent for this to be used.

Ms. Guilmette read Article #20 – Emergency Contingency Fund.

*“Special Warrant Article. Shall the Town establish a contingency fund for the upcoming fiscal year, in accordance with NH RSA 31:98-a, for unanticipated emergency expenses that may arise during said year. Further to raise and appropriate the sum of seventy-four thousand, five hundred thirty-six dollars (\$74,536) to go into the fund, which equals one percent (1%) of the amount appropriated by the Town for Town purposes during the current Fiscal Year excluding capital expenditures and the amortization of debt. Said funds will be taken from the June 30th, 2024, unassigned fund balance for this purpose*

with no amount to be raised from taxation. Any appropriation left in the fund at the end of the year will not be retained but will lapse to the general fund. Before any expenditures are made, a public hearing will be held with notice provided as per NH RSA 91-A:2. A detailed report of all expenditures from the contingency fund shall be made annually by the Selectboard and published with their report.”

Mr. McEwan, Eagle Crest Drive, asked why the funds are transferred back to the general fund if not used. Selectman Trask explained this is set by RSA. The Board is putting this forward because they are tightening up the budgets and trying to get it as close as possible. Ms. Lamphere asked why they are setting up a new fund when this is the definition of the unassigned fund balance. Selectman Trask stated this can be used without going to DRA. Ms. Lamphere pointed out no tax impact is extremely misleading.

Vice Chairman Couture read Article #21 – Establishment and Funding of Vested Vacation Benefit ETF.

*“Special Warrant Article. Shall the Town establish an expendable trust fund under the provision of NH RSA 31:19-a to be known as the Vested Vacation Benefit Expendable Trust Fund and to raise and appropriate the sum of thirty thousand dollars (\$30,000) to be placed in this fund. Further to authorize the transfer of thirty thousand dollars (\$30,000) from the June 30th, 2024 unassigned fund balance for this purpose with no amount to be raised from taxation and to appoint the Selectboard as Agents to Expend. The purpose of this fund is to provide a one-time payment of accrued vacation leave for full-time non-elected employees who retire or leave employment with the Town.*

*The Vested Vacation Benefit Expendable Trust Fund shall not exceed sixty thousand dollars (\$60,000). No additional tax impact.”*

This is an expendable trust fund that is a common practice among governments. Mr. Guilmette asked if there was a max to be carried over. The max for any employee to carry over is two weeks. Ms. Lamphere feels there should be a clause in the handbook that states the vacation is prorated.

Ms. Guilmette read Article #22 – Municipal Complex Roof Replacement.

*“Special Warrant Article. Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of one hundred seventy-six thousand, three hundred thirty dollars (\$176,330) to replace the roof over the Municipal Complex. Should this expenditure be approved in Warrant Article 15, this Article will be tabled.”*

There were no comments or questions on Article #22.

Ms. Guilmette read Article #23 – Highway CIP CRF Funding.

*“Special Warrant Article. Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of one million seven hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$1,750,000) to be added to the capital reserve fund known as the Highway Capital Improvement Plan Capital Reserve Fund established at the 2015 Town Meeting with one hundred forty-six thousand two hundred two dollars (\$146,202) which is the anticipated grant amount this year from the New Hampshire Highway Block Grant to be used to offset this appropriation, two hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000) from the June 30th, 2024 unassigned fund balance to be used to offset this appropriation, and the remainder of one million four hundred three thousand seven hundred ninety-eight dollars (\$1,403,798) to be raised through taxation. Should the actual amount of the Highway Block Grant deviate from what is anticipated, the amount withdrawn from the unassigned fund balance will increase or decrease by that same amount.”*



There were no comments or questions on Article #23.

Ms. Guilmette read Article #24 – Highway CIP CRF.

*“Special Warrant Article. Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of one million six hundred eighty-seven thousand three hundred seventy dollars (\$1,687,370) for roadwork in the Town of Chester and withdraw one million six hundred eighty-seven thousand three hundred seventy dollars (\$1,687,370) from the Highway Capital Improvement Plan Capital Reserve Fund created for these purposes.*

*This will be a non-lapsing article per RSA 32:7-a, IV, and will not lapse until the work is complete, or December 31st, 2026, whichever comes first.”*

Mr. Chaze, Carkin Street, would like to express his gratitude to Town Planner Hadik and SOR Piper for addressing the concerns on both Carkin Street and Donna Street. The entire neighborhood is grateful the two oldest roads in Chester will be fixed this year.

Ms. Guilmette read Article #25 – Fire Department Apparatus CRF Funding.

*“Special Warrant Article. Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of one hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$150,000) to be added to the Capital Reserve Fund known as the Fire Department Apparatus Capital Reserve Fund established at the 2021 Town Meeting. Further to authorize the transfer of one hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$150,000) from the June 30th, 2024 unassigned fund balance for this purpose with no amount to be raised from taxation.”*

There were no comments or questions on Article #25.

Ms. Guilmette read Article #26 – Fire Department Apparatus CRF Spending.

*“Special Warrant Article. Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of six hundred forty-five thousand dollars (\$645,000) for the purchase of an E-One Spartan FC-94 Pumper and associated upfitting to replace the Fire Department’s 2003 Engine #2 Pumper, and withdraw six hundred forty-five thousand dollars (\$645,000) from the Fire Department Apparatus Capital Reserve Fund created for these purposes.*

*This will be a non-lapsing article per RSA 32:7-a, IV, and will not lapse until the work is complete, or December 31st, 2026, whichever comes first.”*

Selectman Trask mentioned this was originally on the warrant for \$1M dollars and the Fire Chief was able to find a vehicle for \$645K.

Ms. Guilmette read Article #27 – Municipal Improvement CRF Funding.

*“Special Warrant Article. Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) to be added to the Municipal Property Improvement Capital Reserve Fund established in 2006 and renamed in 2023. Further to authorize the transfer of fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) from the June 30th, 2024 unassigned fund balance for this purpose with no amount to be raised from taxation. “*

Ms. Guilmette commented on the amount of funding coming from the unassigned fund balance. Selectman Trask pointed out there will still be 10.2% in the unassigned fund balance if all the warrant articles pass at Town Meeting.

Ms. Guilmette read Article #28 – PACT Fund SRF Spending.

*“Special Warrant Article. Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of thirty-eight thousand dollars (\$38,000) for the purpose of providing public, educational, and governmental access television in the Town of Chester. Said funds to be withdrawn from the Special Revenue Fund known as the “PACT” Fund established at the 2003 Town Meeting, separate from the General Fund and funded by Comcast subscribers in the Town of Chester. If passed, this article will have no tax impact.”*

There were no comments or questions on Article #28.

Ms. Guilmette read Article #29 – Conservation Easements.

*“Shall the Town place Conservation Easements on the following Town-owned properties:*

*Map and Lot 009-080-001, 2.79 acres with frontage on Shepard Home Road,  
Map and Lot 005-031-000, 5.12 acres with frontage on North Pond Road, and  
Map and Lot 007-029-001, 8 acres with frontage on Candia Road,*

*in order to permanently protect said area for nature study and recreation, to protect the watershed and wetlands, and to enhance and maintain the scenic, wildlife, and open space that are an intrinsic part of Chester’s valuable rural character for the benefit of the Town of Chester and its citizens.”*

It was asked why the Budget Committee needed to read all the warrant articles. Town Administrator Doda pointed out it is a public hearing for the budget and warrant.

Ms. Guilmette read Article #30 – Complete Road Discontinuance.

*“Shall the Town completely discontinue, pursuant to RSA 231:43, the extension of Ledge Road being that portion that runs from Lane Road northerly to the Raymond Town line, bounded on the west by Tax Map 12 Lot 3 and the east by Tax Map 12 Lots 5 & 5-1, and further to authorize the Selectboard to convey the discontinued portion of the road to the abutting landowners.”*

Ms. Lister asked why this was being asked of the town. Vice Chairman Couture stated this was previously a warrant article that passed with incorrect wording. This is the fix for that.

Vice Chairman Couture read Article #31 – Solar Array

*“Shall the Town authorize the Selectboard to enter into a long-term option and lease agreement with ReVision Energy Inc., or its successors or assignees, to lease a portion of Town-owned property for the construction, installation, and operation of a solar array, on such terms and conditions as determined by the Selectboard and to authorize the Selectboard to take any other actions necessary to carry out this vote.”*

Ms. Guilmette asked who would hold the liability insurance post construction. This question will be asked.

Mr. Hadik, Chester Street, asked where the solar array would be located. Vice Chairman Couture stated it would be behind the burn pile at the Transfer Station.

Ms. Guilmette read Article #32 – Post Office Lease.

*“Special Warrant Article. Shall the Town authorize the Selectboard to enter into a five-year lease with two five-year renewal options with the United States Postal Service for 1,862 square feet on the first floor of the Ruth Ray Building with appropriate curtilage on such terms and conditions as the Selectboard determines are in the best interests of the Town. Further to raise and appropriate the sum of five thousand two hundred dollars (\$5,200) to pay a one-time brokerage commission fee to the United States Postal Service’s Broker.”*

Mr. LaVita, Raymond Road, asked if the Town owned the building and why does the Town pay the broker. Selectman Trask mentioned JLL Enterprises was hired by the government to write the post office lease contract. Vice Chairman Couture stated the Town is being forced to pay the fees for the commission fees to the broker.

Ms. Guilmette read Article #33 – Establishment and Funding of Bridge Repair and Replacement CRF.

*“Special Warrant Article. Shall the Town establish a Bridge Repair and Replacement Capital Reserve Fund under the provisions of RSA 35:1 (II) for the purpose of funding the repair or replacement of bridges in the Town of Chester which have been determined to be structurally deficient. Further to raise and appropriate the sum of two hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000) to be placed in this fund and to authorize the transfer of two hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000) from the June 30th, 2024 unassigned fund balance for this purpose with no amount to be raised from taxation. Further to appoint the Selectboard as agents to expend.”*

Mr. McEwan, Eagle Crest Drive, asked if the funding for roads covered bridges as well. Selectman Trask pointed out the Town currently has two red listed bridges. They each cost over a million dollars to repair. Selectwoman Theokas pointed out if the town has the funds available when the state is ready then there is an 80/20 grant. If the Town does not have the funds, then they will move on to the next town.

Mr. Oleson inquired when Cole Road is being fixed. Lots of funding has been spent on engineering to get that ready. Selectman Trask mentioned it was on the warrant until last week when the Board was informed it would not be able to be started until the summer of 2025.

Ms. Guilmette read Article #34 - Elderly Tax Exemptions Modification

*“Shall the Town modify the Elderly resident property tax exemption amounts pursuant to RSA 72:39-a due to the increased assessment/re-evaluation that is being completed for the 2025 tax year.*

*The Elderly Exemptions, based on assessed value, for qualified taxpayers, shall change as follows: for a person 65 years of age up to 75 years, from \$110,000 to \$154,000; for a person 75 years of age up to 80 years, from \$140,000 to \$196,000; and for a person 80 years of age or older, from \$170,000 to \$238,000.*

*To qualify, the person must have been a New Hampshire resident for at least 5 years, own the real estate individually or jointly, or if the real estate is owned by such a person's spouse, they must have been married for at least 5 consecutive years. In addition, the taxpayer must have a net income of not more*

545 *than \$40,000 or if married, a combined net income of less than \$60,000, and own net assets not in excess*  
546 *of \$300,000 excluding the value of the person's residence.”*

547  
548 There were no comments or questions on Article #34.

549  
550 Vice Chairman Couture read Article #35 - Disabled/Blind Tax Exemptions Modification.

551  
552 *“Shall the Town modify the Disabled and Blind resident property tax exemption amounts pursuant to*  
553 *RSA 72:37 due to the increased assessment / re-evaluation that is being completed for the 2025 tax year.*

554  
555 *The Disabled and Blind Exemptions, based on assessed value, for qualified taxpayers, shall change as*  
556 *follows: for a disabled person, from \$110,000 to \$154,000; and for a blind person, from \$30,000 to*  
557 *\$42,000.*

558  
559 *To qualify for the disabled exemption the person must eligible under the Federal Social Security Act for*  
560 *benefits for the disabled, have been a New Hampshire resident for at least 5 years, own the real estate*  
561 *individually or jointly, or if the real estate is owned by such a person's spouse, they must have been*  
562 *married for at least 5 consecutive years. In addition, the taxpayer must have a net income of not more*  
563 *than \$40,000 or if married, a combined net income of less than \$60,000, and own net assets not in excess*  
564 *of \$300,000 excluding the value of the person's residence.*

565  
566 *To qualify for the Blind Exemption, the resident must be legally blind as determined by the Administrator*  
567 *of Blind Services of the vocational Rehabilitation Division of the Department of Education. There is no*  
568 *income and asset threshold to receive the blind exemption.”*

569  
570 There were no comments or questions on Article #35.

571  
572 Vice Chairman Couture read Article #36 – Petition - Land Use Change Tax Funds Reallocation –  
573 Simple majority ballot vote required.

574  
575 *“Petition Warrant Article. “Shall the Town rescind the action of the 1997 and 1999 Town Meetings to*  
576 *place 100% of the Land Use Change Tax revenues collected pursuant to RSA 79-A into the Conservation*  
577 *Fund, established in 1997, and instead place fifty percent (50%) of said funds into the Capital*  
578 *Improvements Plan – Highway Capital Reserve Fund, established in 2015, and the remaining fifty*  
579 *percent (50%) into the Conservation Fund. This action will become effective on July 1st following the*  
580 *vote.”*

581  
582 Ms. Lamphere pointed out this is another revolving fund that currently has over \$800K. They always  
583 have lots of funds in this account. She feels they should take less than 100% and give back to the  
584 taxpayer.

585  
586 Mr. LaVita stated the reason for this warrant is if the highway department does not have extra funds  
587 where does the town look for funding. This would be a good use for some of the funding from the  
588 Land Use Change Tax.

589  
590 Mr. Hadik, Chester Street, mentioned the money that conservation has taken in and used is not just  
591 for purchasing land, but most is used to buy conservation easements. The Town has saved a lot more  
592 in taxes than has been spent. Imagine how much growth and development there would be in this  
593 town if conservation did not buy the easements. He feels this is cheaper than putting the funds in the  
594 unassigned fund balance.

Selectman Trask mentioned the more money the Town puts in conservation easements, the less land there is to be developed and the less taxes it will cost us down the road. By redirecting the fund into an expenditure fund for the Highway CIP it may put less money into conservation but it would help fund the town’s needs right now.

Vice Chairman Couture would like the long-term legal responsibilities such as stewardships considered.

Vice Chairman Couture read Article #37 – Petition – Ban Voting Machines

*“Petition Warrant Article. “To see if the town will vote to ban the use of voting machines in local, state and federal elections.””*

Town Administrator Doda mentioned to have a petitioned warrant article placed on the ballot, twenty-five registered voters in town must sign.

Ms. Lister pointed out hand counting ballots takes more funding and time.

Selectman Trask agreed and pointed out if one of the hand counting ballot warrant articles passes, then article #40 will be used to fund the extra expenditures for the elections.

Mr. Scott has watched ballot hand counting in the past and wow was it painful.

Ms. Grady, a current ballot clerk, is against hand counting ballots.

Vice Chairman Couture read Article #38 – Petition - Paper Ballots

*“Petition Warrant Article. “Shall the following provisions pertaining to elections be adopted? All voting shall be by paper ballot and all ballots shall be hand counted only, rather than by use of optical scanning or any other types of programmable electronic counting devices. This shall constitute a return to hand counting ballots and the immediate discontinuance of all electronic voting machines and electronic devices authorized for use by trial in RSA 656:40. Shall this article be passed, it shall be enacted by the town of Chester, NH immediately.””*

Mr. Scott, Derry Road, would like to know the difference between the articles. Vice Chairman Couture stated they are similar but different petitions.

Vice Chairman Couture read Article #39 – Petition – Hand Count on November 5th

*“Petition Warrant Article. “To see if the town will vote to hand count on November 5th the election ballots for the office of President of the United States.””*

Ms. Lamphere has never seen a specific date used for hand counting of ballots. There should be an RSA given for reference.

Vice Chairman Couture read Article #40 – Establishment of Hand Counted Ballots ETF.

*“Special Warrant Article. Shall the Town establish an expendable trust fund under the provision of NH RSA 31:19-a to be known as the Hand Counted Ballots Expendable Trust Fund and to raise and*

*appropriate the sum of fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000) to be placed in this fund. Further to appoint the Selectboard as Agents to Expend. The purpose of this fund is to ensure that funds will be available to cover the additional costs that will be incurred if and/or when ballots are required to be hand, rather than machine, counted. “*

Ms. Guilmette mentioned if none of the ballot counting articles are approved, this will not be needed.

Ms. Swanson thanked Town Administrator Doda for researching what other towns have spent on counting ballots and crunching the numbers for Chester.

Vice Chairman Couture read Article #41 – Reports

*“To hear the reports of Agents, Auditors, and Committees of Officers heretofore chosen and pass any vote relating hereto.*

*To transact any other business that may legally come before the Town.”*

Mr. Hadik, Chester Street, asked why there is not a warrant for the Ash Street bridge repairs. Town Administrator Doda stated there will be no tax dollars being used for the project. The Conservation Commission will be funding 50% of the project with the other 50% coming from a grant. Mr. Hadik feels that is very generous of the Conservation Commission.

Mr. Schriber, Jennifer Drive, mentioned the Solar Working Group has spent a lot of hours researching and working on the solar project. He reiterated the project would not interfere with burn pile or the transfer station.

Selectman Trask motioned to close the budget and warrant articles public hearing. Ms. Lister seconded the motion. All were in favor.

The Budget Committee voted on recommendations of the warrant articles.

Article #9 – Repurposing of Mosquito Abatement ETF was seven in the affirmative with one absent.

Article #10 – Legal Costs ETF was seven in the affirmative with one absent.

Article #11 – Repurposing of 300th Anniversary Celebration CRF was seven in the affirmative with one absent.

Article #12 – Repurposing of Commemorative Monument CRF was five in the affirmative, two opposed, and one absent

Article #14 – Municipal CIP CRF Funding was seven in the affirmative with one absent.

Article #15 – Municipal CIP CRF Spending was one in the affirmative, six opposed, and one absent.

Article #16 – Operating Budget was six in the affirmative, one opposed, and one absent.

Article #17 – Town Revaluation CRF Funding was seven in the affirmative with one absent.

Article #18 – Town Master Plan CRF Funding was seven in the affirmative with one absent.

Article #19 - Winter Road Maintenance ETF was seven in the affirmative with one absent.

Article #20 – Emergency Contingency Fund was five in affirmative, two opposed, and one absent.

Article #21 – Establishment and Funding of Vested Vacation Benefit ETF was four in the affirmative, three opposed, and one absent.

Article #22 – Municipal Complex Roof Replacement was seven in the affirmative with one absent.

Article #23 – Highway CIP CRF Funding was five in the affirmative, two opposed, and one absent.

Article #24 – Highway CIP CRF was two in the affirmative, five opposed, and one absent.

Article #25 – Fire Department Apparatus CRF Funding was seven in the affirmative with one absent.

Article #26 – Fire Department Apparatus CRF Spending was seven in the affirmative.

Article #27 – Municipal Improvement CRF Funding was six in the affirmative, one opposed, and one absent.

Article #28 – PACT Fund SRF Spending was seven in the affirmative with one absent.

Article #32 – Post Office Lease was seven in the affirmative with one absent.

Article #33 – Establishment and Funding of Bridge Repair and Replacement CRF was seven in the affirmative with one absent.

Article #36 – Petition - Land Use Change Tax Funds Reallocation was five in the affirmative, two opposed, and one absent.

Article #40 – Establishment of Hand Counted Ballots ETF was seven in the affirmative with one absent.

***Selectman Trask motioned to open the SB2 Public Hearing. Selectwoman Theokas seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – absent, Trask– aye, Theokas –aye, Couture –aye, Landau – absent. With three in favor, the motion passed with Myette and Landau absent.***

Vice Chairman Couture read Article #13 - Petition – SB2 - 3/5th majority ballot vote required; ballot box must remain open for one hour.

*“Petition Warrant Article. “Shall we adopt the provisions of RSA 40:13 (known as SB2) to allow official ballot voting on all issues before the legislative body of the Town of Chester on the second Tuesday of May?””*

Mr. Cannon, Fiddlehead Lane, cautioned the public to be careful what they read and hear about SB2. It is not about creating more opportunities for the people in town to vote. It is a vendetta driven petition from the originator of the article.

Mr. McDonald, Hills Farm Road, stated the way Town Meeting is run here is a vestige to the town’s history. It’s true democracy but it is limited in time, limited on a date, and limited on space therefore it limits the voters. A paper ballot opens that opportunity up for the voter to have their voice heard and he supports it.

Mr. Richardson, Town Farm Road, mentioned the school was SB2 for three to four years and people didn’t like it. Voters are able to discuss the warrants and ask questions much like this evening. With deliberative sessions there’s very few people that show up and dictate what the ballot will look like.

Mr. McEwan, Eagle Crest Drive, asked if this is passed will the meeting be moved back to March? The time would not be limited since the date would not change. Mr. McEwan pointed out this was only the town budget and not the school. With the limited space in the MPR, he feels it is unrealistic to continue with Town Meeting. Town Administrator Doda mentioned the difference between Traditional and SB2 is that there is somewhat of a compressed schedule with SB2.

Ms. Lamphere will refer to the old saying “if it isn’t broken, don’t fix it”. There was a petition years ago for SB2 at the School. It passed and after a few years people decided it was not working and voted to get rid of SB2. One thing to consider with SB2 the default budget is not looked at by DRA.

Mr. LeBlanc, Fremont Road, stated the school tried SB2 and less people went.

Ms. Lister, Fremont Road, is opposed to SB2. People do not go to the deliberative session, and they don’t have the opportunity to have discussions like they are able to do at Town Meeting.

***Selectman Trask motioned to close the SB2 Public Hearing. Selectwoman Theokas seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – absent, Trask– aye, Theokas –aye, Couture –aye, Landau – absent. With three in favor, the motion passed with Myette and Landau absent.***

### **III. New Business**

#### ***3.1 Recommendations and Organization of Warrant***

Town Administrator Doda mentioned now is the time to re-order any of the warrant articles.

Vice Chairman Couture was absent when the Board voted on warrant articles. His vote will be added to the votes from last night.

Vice Chairman Couture voted in the affirmative for Article #9 – Repurposing of Mosquito Abatement ETF. The Selectboard vote will be five in the affirmative.

Vice Chairman Couture voted in the affirmative for Article #10 – Legal Costs ETF. The Selectboard vote will be five in the affirmative.

Vice Chairman Couture voted in the affirmative for Article #11 – Repurposing of 300th Anniversary Celebration CRF. The Selectboard vote will be five in the affirmative.

Vice Chairman Couture voted in the affirmative for Article #12 – Repurposing of Commemorative Monument CRF. The Selectboard vote will be five in the affirmative.



793 Vice Chairman Couture is opposed to Article #13 - Petition – SB2 The Selectboard vote will be four  
794 opposed and one abstained.

795  
796 Vice Chairman Couture voted in the affirmative for Article #14 – Municipal CIP CRF Funding is five in  
797 the affirmative. The Selectboard vote will be five in the affirmative.

798  
799 Vice Chairman Couture voted in the affirmative for Article #15 – Municipal CIP CRF Spending. The  
800 Selectboard vote will be four yes and one opposed.

801  
802 Vice Chairman Couture voted in the affirmative for Article #16 – Operating Budget. The Selectboard  
803 vote will be five in the affirmative.

804  
805 Vice Chairman Couture voted in the affirmative for Article #17 – Town Revaluation CRF Funding. The  
806 Selectboard vote will be four yes and one opposed.

807  
808 Vice Chairman Couture voted in the affirmative for Article #18 – Town Master Plan CRF Funding. The  
809 Selectboard vote will be five in the affirmative.

810  
811 Vice Chairman Couture voted in the affirmative for Article #19 - Winter Road Maintenance ETF. The  
812 Selectboard vote will be five in the affirmative.

813  
814 Vice Chairman Couture voted in the affirmative for Article #20 – Emergency Contingency Fund. The  
815 Selectboard vote will be five in the affirmative.

816  
817 Vice Chairman Couture voted in the affirmative for Article #21 – Establishment and Funding of  
818 Vested Vacation Benefit ETF. The Selectboard vote will be five in the affirmative.

819  
820 Vice Chairman Couture voted in the affirmative for Article #22 – Municipal Complex Roof  
821 Replacement. The Selectboard vote will be five in the affirmative.

822  
823 Vice Chairman Couture voted in the affirmative for Article #23 – Highway CIP CRF Funding. The  
824 Selectboard vote will be five in the affirmative.

825  
826 Vice Chairman Couture voted in the affirmative for Article #24 – Highway CIP CRF. The Selectboard  
827 vote will be five in the affirmative.

828  
829 Vice Chairman Couture voted in the affirmative for Article #25 – Fire Department Apparatus CRF  
830 Funding. The Selectboard vote will be five in the affirmative.

831  
832 Vice Chairman Couture voted in the affirmative for Article #26 – Fire Department Apparatus CRF  
833 Spending. The Selectboard vote will be five in the affirmative.

834  
835 Vice Chairman Couture voted in the affirmative for Article #27 – Municipal Improvement CRF  
836 Funding. The Selectboard vote will be five in the affirmative.

837  
838 Vice Chairman Couture voted in the affirmative for Article #28 – PACT Fund SRF Spending. The  
839 Selectboard vote will be five in the affirmative.

840  
841 Vice Chairman Couture voted in the affirmative for Article #29 – Conservation Easements. The  
842 Selectboard vote will be five in the affirmative.

Vice Chairman Couture voted in the affirmative for Article #30 – Complete Road Discontinuance. The Selectboard vote will be four in the affirmative and one abstained.

Vice Chairman Couture voted in the affirmative for Article #31 – Solar Array. The Selectboard vote will be three in the affirmative, one opposed and one abstained.

Vice Chairman Couture voted in the affirmative for Article #32 – Post Office Lease. The Selectboard vote will be four in the affirmative and one opposed.

Vice Chairman Couture voted in the affirmative for Article #33 – Establishment and Funding of Bridge Repair and Replacement CRF. The Selectboard vote will be five in the affirmative.

Vice Chairman Couture voted in the affirmative for Article #34 - Elderly Tax Exemptions Modification. The Selectboard vote will be five in the affirmative.

Vice Chairman Couture voted in the affirmative for Article #35 - Disabled/Blind Tax Exemptions Modification. The Selectboard vote will be five in the affirmative.

Vice Chairman Couture is opposed to Article #36 – Petition - Land Use Change Tax Funds Reallocation. The Selectboard vote will be one in the affirmative, three opposed and one abstained.

Vice Chairman Couture is opposed to Article #37 – Petition – Ban Voting Machines. The Selectboard vote will be five opposed.

Vice Chairman Couture is opposed to Article #38 – Petition - Paper Ballots. The Selectboard vote will be five opposed.

Vice Chairman Couture is opposed to Article #39 – Petition – Hand Count on November 5th. The Selectboard vote will be opposed and one abstained.

Vice Chairman Couture voted in the affirmative for Article #40 – Establishment of Hand Counted Ballots ETF. The Selectboard vote will be four in the affirmative and one opposed.

#### **IV. Consent Agenda**

##### *4.1 Veterans Credits*

***Selectman Trask motioned to approve the consent agenda. Selectwoman Theokas seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – absent, Trask– aye, Theokas –aye, Couture –aye, Landau – absent. With three in favor, the motion passed with Myette and Landau absent.***

#### **V. Selectmen’s Business**

##### *5.1 Chairman’s Announcements*

Vice Chairman Couture announced the following meetings:

Wednesday, April 24th, 2024 @ 7pm                      Planning Board Meeting – Main Meeting Room

893 Tuesday, April 30th, 2024 @ 7pm Solar Information Public Meeting – Main Meeting  
894 Room  
895  
896 Wednesday, May 1st, 2024 @ 7pm Planning Board Meeting – Main Meeting Room  
897  
898 Wednesday, May 1st, 2024 @ 6pm School Board Meeting – Chester Academy  
899  
900 Thursday, May 2nd, 2024 @6pm Selectboard Public Hearing Meeting (Land Use Change  
901 Tax) – Main Meeting Room  
902  
903 Vice Chairman Couture announced the following event:  
904  
905 Saturday April 27th, 2024 @5pm Lions Club Annual Senior Citizen Banquet in the MPR.  
906  
907 Chief Berube reminded the group of Drug Take Back at the Transfer Station on April 27<sup>th</sup> from 10am  
908 to 2pm.  
909  
910 *5.2 Roundtable*  
911 *None*  
912  
913 *5.3 Town Administrator’s Report*  
914 *Nothing to report.*  
915  
916 *5.4 Action Items*  
917 *Nothing to report.*  
918  
919 *5.5 Non-Public Session(s)*  
920  
921 Vice Chairman Couture announced non publics for reputation and pending litigation.  
922  
923 ***Selectman Trask motioned to go into non-public session pursuant to 91-A:3(II) (c) reputation***  
924 ***and (e) pending litigation. Selectwoman Theokas seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken***  
925 ***Myette – absent, Trask– aye, Theokas –aye, Couture –aye, Landau – absent. With three in favor,***  
926 ***the motion passed with Myette and Landau absent.***  
927  
928 The meeting was closed to the public at 9:35PM.  
929  
930 ***Selectman Trask motioned to come out of non-public session. Vice-Chairman Couture seconded***  
931 ***the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – absent, Trask– aye, Theokas –aye, Couture –aye,***  
932 ***Landau – absent. With three in favor, the motion passed with Myette and Landau absent.***  
933  
934 The meeting was reopened to the public at 9:51 PM.  
935  
936 ***Selectman Trask motioned to seal the minutes of the first non-public session, on Reputation.***  
937 ***Vice-Chairman Couture seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – absent, Trask–***  
938 ***aye, Theokas –aye, Couture –aye, Landau – absent. With three in favor, the motion passed with***  
939 ***Myette and Landau absent.***  
940  
941 ***Selectman Trask motioned to seal the minutes of the second non-public session, on Reputation.***  
942 ***Vice-Chairman Couture seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – absent, Trask–***

*aye, Theokas –aye, Couture –aye, Landau – absent. With three in favor, the motion passed with Myette and Landau absent.*

*Selectman Trask motioned to seal the minutes of the third non-public session, on Pending Litigation. Vice-Chairman Couture seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – absent, Trask– aye, Theokas –aye, Couture –aye, Landau – absent. With three in favor, the motion passed with Myette and Landau absent.*

*Selectman Trask motioned to seal the minutes of the fourth non-public session, on Pending Litigation. Vice-Chairman Couture seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – absent, Trask– aye, Theokas –aye, Couture –aye, Landau – absent. With three in favor, the motion passed with Myette and Landau absent.*

## **VI. Adjournment**

*Selectman Trask moved to adjourn the meeting. Selectwoman Theokas seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – absent, Trask– aye, Theokas –aye, Couture –aye, Landau – absent. With three in favor, the motion passed with Myette and Landau absent.*

The meeting was adjourned at 9:59 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Janis A. Jalbert  
Recording Secretary